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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, March 29, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MORE INSECT QUESTIONS." Information from the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, United States Department of Agriculture.

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"Please tell me," writes a listener this week -- "Please tell me which is better for killing moths, cedar or tar paper in dress bags."

The entomologists answer with one word. They say: "Neither." Neither cedar nor tar paper kills clothes moths, nor, for that matter, pine-oil paper, nor newspaper in garment bags. Paper bags for clothes are useful in just one way, and that is keeping the moths out. And they only keep moths out if they are made of unbroken paper and tightly sealed at every opening. Moths will not eat their way through paper. But they may crawl into cracks or open edges or broken places in the paper.

Dr. E. A. Back of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine has this to say about garment bags: "If clothing free from moths is put into an unbroken garment bag that is tightly closed and sealed, the paper will keep moths out indefinitely." But he goes on to say: "Once moths get into the bags, either with clothing or through breaks in the paper or at the fastenings, damage will result." And the smell of tar or cedar or pine oil -- or anything else will have no effect on the moth's appetite. (Moths don't mind smells though they may die from a gas that happens to have an odor.) So a heavy, plain paper bag is just as useful against these insects as a bag that has been doctored up with tar or pine or cedar. Protection for clothes depends on being sure no moths or moth eggs go into the bag on the clothes, and then on carefully sealing the bag. Gummed paper is very handy for sealing.

One opening that is often forgotten in the garment bag is the hole at the top where the clothes-hanger comes through. Be sure to seal that up.

The same answer -- or about the same answer goes to listeners who have inquired about the value of cardboard boxes or closets and paper wrappings for moth protection.

Writes a young housewife: "How useful are those cardboard clothes closets against moths?"

Quoting Dr. Back again: "Cardboard closets are of very doubtful value. Many **are** worthless. If very tight, they protect after the fashion of paper garment bags. The cedar or pine oil in cardboard closets or boxes is of no value against moths."

As for wrapping your winter clothes in paper, that was something our grandmothers used to do and it still is a good practice if the clothes are entirely free of moths and if every opening of the wrapping is sealed tightly.

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Grandmother used to sun and brush the winter woollens free of moths, or wash them, and then immediately wrap them in paper, taking care to fold or glue all the edges so that moths could not get in. All the research which the entomologists have done on clothes moths shows that grandmother was right. You can still keep your clothes safe from moth holes by carefully wrapping them in good firm paper or by sealing them in unbroken hat boxes or cardboard boxes -- if they are absolutely free of moths to begin with.

Just for protection, Grandmother usually put mothballs in with the clothes. And again the entomologists agree. You can use either mothballs or flakes of naphthalene. Flakes have the advantage of being easier to distribute and of evaporating faster.

"Are sunning and brushing still approved methods for getting rid of moths on clothes?" asks still another questioner.

Answer: Yes, indeed. Dr. Back says: "The soft eggs are easily crushed or dislodged by thorough brushing. Pay particular attention to all seams, hems, folds, pockets and so on. Moths cannot stand bright sun. Larvae drop to the ground from clothing left hanging in the sun on the line, especially if no folds are present in which they can find protection from the light rays."

"Please send me a leaflet or bulletin telling the best methods of getting rid of clothes moths," says another letter.

So I am sending the new clothes moth leaflet, just published this spring by the Department of Agriculture. I have mentioned this leaflet before but for all listeners with moth problems, let me say again that the name of the new leaflet is simply "Clothes Moths," that the number is 145, and that anyone can get a copy by writing to the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C., and asking for it.

You might think that moths were the only insects disturbing listeners these days. Far from it. Cockroaches and ants and silverfish and carpet beetles and so on are bringing in plenty of worried letters.

Here's a sample: "My kitchen is overrun with tiny ants. I think I have cleaned every trace of food away at night yet in the morning I find the ants everywhere. Will you tell me of some powder I can use to keep them away?"

Dr. Back says: "Sodium fluoride powder dusted about window sills, drain-boards, foundations and other places where ants crawl will often drive them away, but not always. If effective, it makes an easily applied and cheap control. But sodium fluoride is a poison, so do not get it into food and keep it away from children and pets."

I am sending this listener another brand-new leaflet. This is Leaflet No. 147 called "House Ants." And you can get a copy in the same way you can get the clothes moth leaflet -- by writing to the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C., and asking for it.

As long as the free supply of these insect leaflets lasts, they are free for the asking.
